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ABSTRACT

A grant proposal was developed with the objectives of increasing retention, improving the image, and increasing volunteer participation at a Florida high school, Boca Ciega. The program encompassed 15 strategies to accomplish these objectives, many being new models of school/community relationships. Students were identified in the eighth grade and given the opportunity to enroll in a special alternative program. Students not in the alternative program but who seemed to have school adjustment problems were identified by teachers and placed in an "Adopt-a-Student" program with teachers providing a role model, showing there was someone who cared, helping the students set realistic goals, and enhancing the student's self-esteem. A peer counseling program/youth motivator program is currently being started in which high school students work with middle and elementary school students. A video tape using alumni, military recruiters, and turn-around students to entice students to stay in school is being developed. A data bank of alumni names, addresses, and places of employment is used as a volunteer recruitment tool. Alumni and parents served as youth motivators and tutors. Volunteer hours and numbers increased as the program became established. A newsletter, extra assemblies, facelift, a videotape for civic organizations, and pep club were used to improve the community's image of the school. A magnet school study was undertaken. The Excellence in Education grant program has been a successful addition to Boca Ciega High School. (ABL)

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END OF THE YEAR REPORT

1986-87

PUFF UP THE PIRATE'S CHEST

A

PROJECT

AND

GRANT PROPOSAL

TO

* *INCREASE RETENTION*

* *INPROVE INAGE*

* *INCREASE VOLUNTEER PARTICIPATION*

By

Boca Ciega High School
924 58th Street South
St. Petersburg, Florida 33707

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HOME OF THE PIRATES

Barbara M. Paonessa, Principal

Millie Parker, Project Supervisor

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Boca Ciega High School serves eight diverse communities and consequently a diverse student population. The student population in May of 1987 was 1528 with a faculty of 106. Fifty-three percent of the family income of Boca Ciega students is over $30,000. The economic growth of the area is not significant as most areas are 98% constructed. The student population is 75% white, 24% black, .006% Hispanic and .01% Oriental. The courses of study offered are general, vocational, and college preparatory. The special education programs are specific learning disabilities (SLD), Communication disorders (CD), and enhanced learning program (ELP).

The objectives of the grant are to improve student attendence by decreasing the drop-out rate by 40%, to increase parent, community, alumni and business volunteers by 200, and to significantly improve the school's image thereby promoting student success and enthusiasm. The project encompasses fifteen strategies to accomplish these objectives, many being new models of school/community relationships.

In order to reduce the dropout rate, students were identified from an "early leaver" composite or profile as outlined in the 1985 longitudinal study, The Evaluation of High School Dropouts: A Traceback of Pinellas County School Records. Based primarily on these statistics and review of other studies on the dropout student, the typical dropout in Pinellas County has many of the following characteristics:

1. *A grade point average of 1.5 or lower*
2. *Low stanines on standardized test scores*
3. *Overage for grade*
4. *Retained*
5. *Discipline problems and suspensions*
6. *Attendance problems*
7. *Enrollment discontinuities*
8. *A history of dropouts in the family*
9. *Noninvolvement in school activities*
10. *Ineligible for any DEES program*
11. *Involvement with social agencies*
12. *Frequent and/or extended health problems*
13. *Poor self-concept*
14. *Previous enrollment in an alternative program*
15. *Administrative promotion*

Students were identified in the eighth grade and given the opportunity to enroll in a special program called GOALS (Graduation Options: Alternatives to Leaving School). This program is now in its third year and has proven to be successful in keeping students in school who otherwise would have dropped out.

The students who were not in the GOALS program, but seemed to have some school adjustment problems were identified by teachers and placed in the "Adopt-a-Student" program. There were twelve teachers acting as "parents" for twenty-five students. Teachers enlisted for the program are those who expressed the desire to participate. The students targeted for the program have one or more of the following characteristics:

1. Missing a parent as a role model
2. Getting little or no support from the home environment
3. Running with the "wrong" crowd
4. In trouble with the law
5. A potential dropout
6. Lacking self-esteem and confidence
7. Working far below his potential in school
8. Ostracized from his peers

The teachers in the program are expected to:

1. Provide an exemplary role model for each student
2. Show that there is someone who cares, and that someone is willing to listen and help
3. Assist these students in setting realistic educational and personal goals that, among other things, will keep them in high school until graduation
4. Enhance each student's confidence and self-esteem so that he/she will strive to achieve

By the end of the school year only one of these students left school. This program will again be implemented in the 1987-88 school year.

The peer care and counseling program was implemented by the Time Out Room teacher at the beginning of the school year. When the teacher left and the Time Out Room was changed to become an Intervention Center, the program was disbanded. A peer counseling/youth motivator program is being started with students in our Child Care classes. These students will go to the middle schools and elementary schools to work with students who have low self-esteem or school adjustment problems. These students may also do some tutoring if needed.

A video tape to show to potential dropouts was not fully completed as of June 1987. St. Petersburg Vocational Technical Institute is working on corrections and additions. Performing on the tape are alumni, military recruiters and turn-around students to entice students to stay in school.

The final tabulation of withdrawals for the 1986-87 school year is not completed as of this date. In May, 1987 27 withdrew for non-attendance, 20 for vocational technical school, 31 for adult and night school, and 26 for work, illness or other reasons. These figures are below the 1985-86 school year for non-attendance, adult and night school, and for work, illness, etc.

In order to increase the number of volunteers in the school, the alumni were used as the most viable resource A data bank of 11,000 alumni names, addresses and places of employment has been completed. The list is continually being updated. Many alumni hase responded positively to being a resource person to volunteer in the school this year (1987-88). Eight thousand alumni received the two newsletters which were published last year, eleven thousand will receive the fall '88 newsletter. (see copy of Spring newsletter following report).

Alumni and parents were used as youth motivators and tutors. The youth motivators work one hour per week with a potential dropout to help set short term and long term goals and to see the value of staying in school.

The number of volunteer hours increased from 2797 hours donated in 1985-86 to 3960 hours donated in 1986-87 with the actual number of volunteers increasing by 50. The quality and quantity of volunteer time has been most beneficial.

The objective to improve the community's image of the school has been very successful. A newsletter to parents was mailed each six weeks and the extra communication from the school was very favorably received. The newsletter will continue this new school year.

Another method of enhancing the school's image was with extra assemblies including pep assemblies and a special assembly for Pinellas County's 75th anniversary celebration with our special guest who is an alumni and a local politician.

The meeting with the press, realtors, parents and alumni to show the positive aspects of the school will be held the 1987-88 school year so that all of the school facility beautification will be completed. The school is undergoing a one million dollar facelift which also helps improving the school's image. This included painting, repairing, carpeting, and landscaping.

A positive image video tape of the school is complete and has been shown to civic organizations in the community. The tape was produced by students at the St. Petersburg Vocational Technical Institute.

It was not structurally feasible to open up the trophy case in the front has so all the trophies are now on display in the school media center. The visibility of the trophies to all students has been greatly increased and the students are able to appreciate the great honors bestowed on the school over the years.

A pep club was formed to add school spirit to sporting and other events. The 75 members kept the spirit all year long with overwhelming energy. The club has already received 150 applications for the new school year.

A magnet school committee was formed to discuss several special programs to draw new students to the school. Following the text are copies of the minutes which explain the programs they explored. The committee recommended a concept introduced by Dale Parnell in a book, the Neglected Majority. This program would be in conjuction with St. Petersburg Junior College and must be approved by the Pinellas County School Board before any further steps can be taken.

The entire Excellence in Education grant program has been a very successful addition to Boca Ciega High School. The attitudes of teachers, students, alumni and the community in general has been very favorable. Another school attempting a program on a massive scale such as this would need a strong committee working together and devoting much time and energy. The enthusiasm of this grant's committee will keep many of the activities and concepts going long after the grant is completed.

The alumni organization is incorporated and has begun fund raising on its own to finance the fall newsletter and keep the organization active. The organization of this group would not have been possible without this grant.

The number of volunteers should continue to grow as a result of the activities of the alumni and the increased communication by the parent newsletter. The parent newsletter will continue with some minor funding by the grant for postage only and the school picking up the cost of paper. The pepclub and all the dropout prevention programs will continue with minimal funding from the grant and eventually after this school year be self-sufficient.

FINAL REPORT

1987-88

PUFF UP THE PIRATE'S CHEST

A

PROJECT

AND

GRANT PROPOSAL

TO

** INCREASE RETENTION*

** IMPROVE IMAGE*

** INCREASE VOLUNTEER PARTICIPATION*

By

Boca Ciega High School
924 58th Street South
St. Petersburg, Florida 33707

HOME OF THE PIRATES

Barbara M. Paonessa, Principal

Millie Parker, Project Supervisor

The three objectives of the Excellence in Education grant are to reduce the dropout rate, to increase the number of volunteers, and to improve the image of the school within the community and within the school population. All three objectives are tied together as each one enhances the other. The volunteers will bring more help for teachers and administrators and students, which in turn will improve the working atmosphere, which will enhance the drawing power of the school setting for both students, volunteers and the community.

The volunteer hours have increased on the average of 1000 per year since the 1985-86 school year. There is a general concern in the community to prevent students from dropping out which is carrying over in volunteers, tutors, youth motivators, mentors and donations to our new Academic/Attendance Booster Program.

The Academic/Attendance Booster Program (see attached forms) is designed to increase student motivations to improve academic performance and school attendance, by using positive recognition. We are recognizing academic achievement and good attendance with school spirit items, gift certificates and invitations to special events.

The Adopt-a-Student program was in effect for 2 years. During the 2nd year there were 25 teachers and 35 at-risk students participating. Only 6 students left the program --- 2 transferred to other schools, 1 is incarcerated and 3 dropped out of high school. New students were added as space became available. The following are seen as strengths in this program:

1. It improves our services to "at-risk" students.
2. Provides emotional and academic support at a very personal level.
3. Improves students' attitudes toward school and teachers in general.
4. Promotes good self-concept for students who are traditionally lacking in that area.
5. Allows teachers and students to get to know each other in a less formal situation.
6. Provides a listener for students in desperate need of one.

The following are seen as weaknesses in the program:

1. We have so many students who could benefit from this program; we need to involve more teachers.
2. We need to increase the contact time between the participating students and their teachers.

There are two suggestions for improving the program. The first is to target students in the Spring Semester for the following year, when teachers know the students who would best be served. The second is in asking teachers to sign up at that same time for the next year. They may be more willing to commit then and not in the fall when things are so hectic.

This program has not been continued on a formal basis for the current school year. A new program implemented this year to help fulfill some of the same needs is the utilization of peer facilitators for counseling purposes. There is an 8 week training session prior to the students working with other students. The video tape created to show to potential dropouts and the positive school image video will be utilized by the peer facilitators.

All the objectives concerning the alumni have been met. There is an established data bank of 12,000 alumni, a regularly published alumni newsletter and an established alumni corporation.

The volunteer hours were increased from 2797 hours donated in 1985-86 to 3960 hours donated in 1986-87 with the actual number of volunteers increasing by 50. This year, so far, we have had more volunteers to be tutors and youth motivators than in previous years. The community awareness has helped.

The image of our school in the community and to our own students and faculty has greatly improved over the past few years. The grant money used to fund spirit items has made a lasting impact on the school in general and some specific areas in particular. The pep club is continuing to use megaphones, pom-poms, and permenant identification tags bought with the funds. The video tape showing the positive progress at our school has been shown to various community and service organizations.

Two new programs this year are Army ROTC and HERO (Health Education Related Occupations) program. Both programs were discussed as options by our Magnet School Committee. HERO is a joint effort between Boca Ciega High School and St. Petersburg Junior College. The students have the opportunity to begin preparation for a specific health career while still in high school with special admission consideration given for the health program of each student's choice. (See appendix).

The volunteers work as tutors, youth motivators, supporters of academic/attendance booster program and various other capacities to enhance our existing programs and also work with potential dropouts. Youth motivators are trained by our county volunteer department in communication and listening skills. They are selected for being positive role models for potential dropout students, and they are caring empathetic people. They discuss setting goals (both long and short term) with the students, as well as, decision-making, study skills, stress management and it is possible to tutor if it arises that they need help in a particular class.

Our school's dropout rate has improved from 10.4% in the 1986-87 school year to 7.2% in the 1987-88 school year. With more incentive programs being added, our student dropout rate will continue to decrease.

This grant has been instrumental in turning our school around and the positive trend will continue.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS - PUFF UP THE PIRATE'S CHEST

(An Excellence in Education grant to Boca Ciega High School in St. Petersburg Florida from the U.S. Department of Education, OERI, 1986-88)

This project in Boca Ciega High School (St. Petersburg, FL) aimed to improve student attendance by reducing the dropout rate, improve the school's image within the student body and the community to promote student success, and increase parent, community, alumni and business volunteers in these efforts. A profile of early leavers was developed as a starting point.

Volunteer faculty members "adopted" students meeting them regularly. Peer, parent and other adults were trained to help potential dropouts. Volunteer hours increased throughout the two year project. An Academic/Attendance Booster Program was designed to increase student motivation. Youth motivators worked with students, while other volunteers tutored, called absentees, were class speakers, or worked on the booster program.

A dropout video was produced for use by each youth motivator, and another video on the progress of the school was produced and shown to various local organizations. A volunteer handbook was updated, and used in training volunteers.

A data bank on 12,000 alumni was created. Newsletters to alumni, parents and the community helped recruit volunteers and projected positive aspects of the school. Assemblies, the video tape and meetings for the press, parents, alumni, and business and community groups were used to promote the school's image.

Strengths and weaknesses of the program are assessed. It has now ended. The dropout rate declined, and all objectives were deemed met.

Written by:

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1/20/89

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